

Cuts in military long-awaited move

Don't look now, but the Pentagon did something right.

More than 140,000 National Guard and reserve positions are pegged for elimination nationwide over this year and next. And the good news doesn't stop there: total cuts will equal 234,000 over the next five years, meaning a savings of \$20 billion.

The monetary savings is a long time in coming. No one needs to be told this country spends a very pretty penny on its military — pretty pennies that every American isn't happy spending.

America is in worsening financial shape with a deficit almost as big as Bill Clinton's head. It's about time some reductions were made somewhere in our martial monster, and our overblown military is a good place to start.

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It's also obvious the time of huge international military forces is over; for those who disagree, consider the alternative. America calls itself the world's police, its beacon of light. It's ridiculous to set ourselves up on a pedestal via such labels, but for those who like such heights, why not set an example by being the first to cut our military — a sign of peace.

The military may even benefit from the cuts. "Reserve forces must take a lesser priority when scarce dollars are needed for ammo, supplies and spare parts," said U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-El Cajon, who sits on the House Armed Services Committee.

That's right, tighten up the flabby areas by shaving off the excess. Money and resources will be used more efficiently; only the best people will be retained. Slimming right down into a mean, green fightin' machine.

Some may argue the move hurts America's military forces, figuring every cut means a lessening of our perceived might. Let those people be consoled by the fact that America's full-time, active duty forces will still be present to throw the country's obese weight around.

Overall, the cuts are a great move, the only downfall being the loss of income to those depending on the eliminated jobs. In the long run, however, it will make even those people's lives just a little better.



"I'M SORRY, MR. RUSHDIE, BUT MR. BUSH ISN'T IN RIGHT NOW... AND WOULD YOU PLEASE NOT STAND SO CLOSE WITH THAT NASTY THING."

COMMENTARY

Cult of ethnicity destined to fail

By Ron Rousseve

In a thought-provoking article in the January 1992 issue of *Harper's Magazine*, editor Lewis Lapham offered some observations on "Who and What is American?"

In his quest for the character traits we hold in common, Lapham finds the theme of "metamorphosis" permeating the whole chronicle of American biography. He says, "If America is about nothing else, it is about the invention of the self. Because we have little use for history, and because we refuse the comforts of a society established on the blueprint of class privilege, we find ourselves set adrift in an existential void, inheriting nothing except the obligation to construct a plausible self..."

From the perspective of my own development as a non-white American, I find myself affirming Lapham's perception that the promise of America is about self-renewal and "becoming." It is not about posturing over denied past opportunities.

A contemporary case in point is that of Marcus Mabry. In April 1988, he was a junior at Stanford University studying literature and international relations. This information appeared along with a small photograph of Mabry — a black American — on the page in *Newsweek on Campus* that featured his quest essay entitled "Living in Two Worlds."

In that commentary, Mabry contrasted the poverty of his home community in New Jersey with the academic milieu at Stanford. He also disclosed his strong commitment to education.

Today he is a staff reporter and associate editor with *Newsweek* magazine.

These introductory observations are relevant from at least two points of reference: First, they serve to remind us that the continuing struggle for inclusion and access in American society has been waged on two fronts, one political and the other personal.

Second, for those who (like Marcus Mabry) choose the personal achievement pathway, it

is imperative that one's sense of self not be anchored exclusively to a limiting, race-centered perspective. In other words, an aspiring journalist who happens to be black must be able to extend beyond the black experience culturally if he/she hopes to achieve success in mainstream American journalism.

Perhaps it should be acknowledged that I remain strongly committed to the ideal of integration and to an opportunity structure that eventually will feature no special restrictions or favors based on race, ethnicity or gender — just the right to rise or fall on one's individual merit.

But as I look out over America's educational terrain today, I find evidence of a disturbing trend back toward a divisive form of "neotribalism" characterized by distinct ethnic enclaves. In this current development, far from asking racial and ethnic groups to extend themselves beyond their particular ancestral socialization patterns, they are somehow encouraged to preserve those various orientations from yesteryear that allegedly produce a rich and savory "diversity" on campus.

And as all of this is occurring, there are costly "trade-offs" having to do with insufficient personal empowerment in terms of current mainstream competencies!

While Marcus Mabry remains conscious of his racial heritage, his sense of personhood clearly extends beyond that one dimension of his being. Accordingly, in his present journalistic work with *Newsweek*, he has achieved creditable empowerment based upon a marketable professional competence that transcends race.

The noted historian Arthur M. Schlesinger has captured well the core idea that undergirds this essay. In his 1991 book, *The Disuniting of Ameri-*

ca: Reflections on a Multicultural Society, Schlesinger describes America as "a transforming nation, banishing dismal memories and developing a unique national character based on common political ideals and shared experiences. The point of America was not to preserve old cultures, but to forge a new American culture."

It seems to me, incidentally, that this view is very consistent with the one about "becoming" that was cited at the beginning of this commentary. Moreover, Schlesinger reminds us that the "Africanization of black Americans has not got very far" and asserts that "most American-born members of minority groups, white or non-white, while they may cherish particular heritages, still see themselves primarily as Americans."

In the end, I believe the cult of ethnicity is destined to fail in America. I also contend that genuine self-esteem stems from personal achievement in the larger, present-day culture in which we must all eventually find a niche of security. Again, the example of Marcus Mabry comes to mind. His racial heritage is but one component of his sense of who he is. Clearly, his national citizenship and his professional identity are other affirming facets of the "multidimensional mosaic" that symbolizes his consciousness of self.

I shall continue to hope that non-white American minority students on campus will manage to acknowledge their ethnic heritage and to acquire the kinds of marketable competencies that are currently valued in our society. Not to operate from that kind of balanced perspective would be to allow the seductive rhetoric of diversity to militate against the achievement of real personal empowerment — and a genuine sense of human affirmation.

Ron Rousseve is a professor of counseling psychology at the University.

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